

RURAL DISTRICT OF BRIDGWATER

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ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

FOR THE YEAR 1944

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G.H. PRINGLE, M.R.C.S. (Eng.) L.R.C.P. (Lond.), D.P.H.

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

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RURAL DISTRICT OF BRIDGWATER

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OF HEALTH FOR 1944

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Health Department,  
Town Hall,  
Bridgwater.

August, 1945.

To the Chairman and Members of the  
Bridgwater Rural District Council.

Mr. Chairman, Mrs. Forshaw and Gentlemen,

I have pleasure in presenting my Fourth Annual Report  
on the health of the Rural District.

The report is in the same abbreviated form as last  
year, but certain vital statistics which have been  
withheld during the past few years can now be published.  
Compared with 1938, the last year when a full report was  
presented, there is a considerable rise in the birth rate  
and a slight fall in the death rate.

I would commend for your particular attention, the  
general review of water supplies, and in the Chief  
Sanitary Inspector's Report, the paragraph on the subject  
of moveable dwellings.

I wish to thank the Chairman and Members of the Public  
Health Committee for their support, Mr. Myle and his  
assistant for their excellent co-operation, and the Heads  
of other Departments for their assistance during the year.

I am,  
Your obedient Servant,

G.H. PRINGLE.



# STATISTICS FOR THE YEAR 1944.

Area (acres)	86,608
Population (Registrar General's estimate)	19,410
No. of inhabited houses on 31st December, 1944	5,385
Rateable value on 31st December, 1944	£79,722
Sum represented by a 1d. rate on 31st December, 1944	£ 335

## Live Births

	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
Legitimate	172	166	338
Illegitimate	10	20	30
	<u>182</u>	<u>186</u>	<u>368</u>

Birth Rate per 1,000 of estimated resident population 18.96

Still Births ... .. Total 12  
Still Birth rate per 1,000 total (live & still) births 31.58

Death rate - Total number of deaths 258  
Rate per 1,000 of the estimated resident population 13.29  
No comparability factor available for 1944. The above uncorrected rate would probably be appreciably lower if corrected for age and sex distribution.

## Puerperal Deaths

	<u>Deaths</u>	<u>Rate per 1,000 Births</u>
From Puerperal Sepsis	0	0
From other Maternal Causes	0	0

## Infantile Mortality (Deaths of infants under one year of age)

Legitimate	... ..	14
Illegitimate	... ..	<u>3</u>
		<u>17</u>

Rate for all infants per 1,000 live births 46.2  
Rate for all legitimate infants per 1,000  
legitimate live births ... .. 41.42  
Rate for all illegitimate infants per 1,000  
illegitimate live births ... .. ~~8.88~~  
100

## Other Deaths

Deaths from Cancer (all ages)	... ..	34
" " measles (all ages)	... ..	-
" " Whooping Cough (all ages)	... ..	1
" " Diarrhoea (under 2 years of age)	... ..	2

Causes of Death during 1944.

Causes of Death	M	F	Total
All causes ... ..	127	131	258
1. Typhoid and para-typhoid fevers	-	-	-
2. Cerebro-spinal fever	1	-	1
3. Scarlet Fever	-	-	-
4. Whooping cough	-	1	1
5. Diphtheria	-	-	-
6. Tuberculosis of respiratory system	2	6	8
7. Other forms of tuberculosis	3	1	4
8. Syphilitic diseases	-	1	1
9. Influenza	-	1	5
10. Measles	-	-	-
11. Acute poliomyelitis and polioencephalitis	-	-	-
12. Acute infantile encephalitis	-	1	1
13. Cancer of buccal cavity and oesophagus (m) uterus (f)	3	4	7
14. Cancer of stomach and duodenum	4	5	9
15. Cancer of breast	-	3	3
16. Cancer of all other sites	7	8	15
17. Diabetes	-	-	-
18. Intra-cranial vascular lesions	14	21	35
19. Heart Disease	34	28	62
20. Other diseases of the circulatory system	2	1	3
21. Bronchitis	6	4	10
22. Pneumonia	4	4	8
23. Other respiratory diseases	6	-	6
24. Ulcer of stomach or duodenum	1	1	2
25. Diarrhoea under 2 years	1	1	2
26. Appendicitis	-	2	2
27. Other digestive diseases	5	3	8
28. Nephritis	5	7	12
29. Puerperal and post-abortion sepsis	-	-	-
30. Other maternal causes	-	-	-
31. Premature births	3	3	6
32. Congenital malformations, birth injuries infantile diseases	2	3	5
33. Suicide	1	2	3
34. Road traffic accidents	5	-	5
35. Other violent causes	2	1	3
36. All other causes	12	19	31

PREVALENCE AND CONTROL OVER INFECTIOUS  
AND CONTAGIOUS DISEASES.

The following table sets out the cases of notifiable diseases that occurred in the Rural District during 1944. The table is drawn up after making the necessary amendments to the original notifications owing to corrections in diagnosis by either the practitioners or the Medical Officers at the Isolation Hospitals:-

<u>Disease</u>	
Acute Encephalitis Lethargica	1
Acute Poliomyelitis	1
Cerebro-spinal Meningitis	3
Diphtheria	3
Dysentery	6
Enteric Fever (including paratyphoid)	-



Erysipelas	2
Malaria (contracted abroad)	7
Measles	80
Ophthalmia Neonatorum	1
Pneumonia	4
Puerperal Pyrexia	1
Scarlet Fever	41
Small Pox	-
Whooping Cough	57
	<u>207</u>

#### Small-pox contacts.

During the past few years one or more cases of small-pox have arisen on board a number of homeward bound ships. Contacts of such cases who are allowed to proceed to their destinations are kept under surveillance for a period of 14 days after arrival.

This most important precaution has necessitated a considerable number of visits to contacts whose homes are in the Rural District.

#### Diphtheria Immunisation.

The following table shows the number of children who completed a course of immunisation during the year:-

Age under 5 years	Age 5 - 15 years	Total
275	143	418

The percentage of the child population in the Rural District considered immunised at the end of the year were:-

Under 5 years - 71%  
5 - 15 years - 85%

As in previous years each village or a special centre serving groups of villages, was visited once to twice during the year, or whenever there were sufficient children to warrant a special visit. The work is not easy to arrange in a scattered rural area, and I am extremely grateful for the assistance and enthusiasm I have received from District Nurses, School Teachers, and voluntary helpers.

The best method of protection is to give each child two immunising injections at one year of age, and a third reinforcing injection early in school life.

#### Tuberculosis.

There were 27 cases of respiratory and 7 cases of non-respiratory tuberculosis notified during the year.

#### Scabies.

The number of Rural District cases of scabies treated at the Old Isolation Hospital was as follows:-

Male Adults	15
Female Adults	38
Children	<u>124</u>
	<u>177</u>

No changes have been made in the treatment arrangements which continue to function satisfactorily.

The total number of cases treated is again less than the previous year, a satisfactory position that also exists in adjacent districts.

#### SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA

##### Water

The piped water supply of the Bridgwater Rural District is derived from springs in the Quantock Hills.

There are a number of sources of supply of which the following are the chief:-

1. Willoughby, which is considerably augmented by bulk supply from the Ashford Reservoir (Bridgwater Borough)
2. Nether Stowey
3. Bridgwater Borough also supplies direct from the Ashford Reservoir, an area of the Rural District including Cannington and Compton.

In addition there are the following small supplies:-

Fiddington  
Goathurst } both private supplies  
Thurloxtan }  
Quantock Sanatorium

It will be seen that there are no less than seven sources and having regard to the fact that distribution from small independent sources creates difficulties of control and may not be really economic, I am hopeful that a comprehensive scheme can be worked out to cover the whole district from the smallest possible number of reliable sources.

In general the supplies are fairly satisfactory in both quality and quantity, but distribution of the main Willoughby supply has at times failed in the more distant parishes, i.e. the Polden Hills area. The Council's Consulting Engineers commenced their survey of the water supply of the whole district at the end of the year, and a preliminary report has recently been received.

The three major supplies - Willoughby, Nether Stowey, and the Bridgwater Borough supply - are chlorinated.

Regular bacteriological examinations can be summarised as follows:-

Willoughby 12 examinations were made, and except on 3 occasions when a small number of *E. coli* suggested incomplete chlorination, the results can be considered to be satisfactory.

Nether Stowey 13 examinations were made during the year, but only 6 were really satisfactory. There was no definite evidence of harmful contamination, but the results far too frequently suggest inadequate chlorination.

Of the minor supplies, which are all untreated, twelve samples were taken from Fiddington, Goathurst and Thurloxtan respectively. The results of these examinations were reported as satisfactory in eight samples from



Fiddington, five from Goatburst, and five from Thurloxtan. In no case was there any definite evidence of harmful contamination being present, but there does seem to be a case for the linking-up of supplies wherever possible as by this means any necessary treatment would be concentrated at one or two places only. It is my opinion that only by some such method can really satisfactory bacteriological results be achieved. I understand that the Consulting Engineers are giving consideration to the matter in their review of the supply throughout the district.

The following statistics show the extent of public supplies in terms of houses and population:-

- |   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| 1. Total number of dwellings in the Rural District                                    | 5460             |
| 2. Total number of dwellings supplied from public water mains direct to the houses    | 4525<br>(82.9%)  |
| Estimated population in the above 4525 houses   | 16968<br>(87.5%) |
| 3. Total number of dwellings supplied from public water mains by means of stand-pipes | 22<br>(0.4%)     |
| Estimated population in the above 22 houses   | 82<br>(0.42%)    |

#### Sewage Disposal

I have received the following report from Mr. L.S. Clatworthy, Engineer and Surveyor of the Rural District:-

"No extensive works were carried out during the year but various lengths of old sewers were repaired or relaid as occasion demanded.

In December 1944, Messrs. Lemon & Blizzard, the Council's Consulting Engineers commenced their survey of the Water Supply and Sewerage of the whole district and their preliminary report is awaited."

#### Sanitary Inspection of the Area.

The records given in the Chief Sanitary Inspector's report show the number of insanitary conditions dealt with.

#### HOUSING.

During the year the Council formulated a First Post-war Housing Programme which provides for the erection of 150 houses in various parishes in the District. The proposals have received the approval of the Ministry of Health and negotiations are proceeding for the acquisition of the necessary sites.

A report prepared by the Rural Housing Sub-committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee entitled "Rural Housing" will probably favourably affect rural housing programmes in the future. Local interest in this excellent report was considerably strengthened by the fact that Sir Arthur Hobhouse was the Chairman of the Sub-committee responsible for its production. The recommendation that in each county there should be set up a Joint Committee consisting of representatives of all the Rural District Councils in the county, and of the County Council in its health and housing capacity and other

representatives of bodies interested in housing, was implemented towards the end of the year; and in addition special Sub-Committees dealing with housing standards, Rural District housing surveys, building labour and materials, and reconditioning were formed.

#### EMERGENCY WORK.

During the year the Health Department continued to deal with a large amount of work in connection with Civil Defence, Evacuation, and other aspects of war work.

It can now be recorded that a scheme was arranged and worked jointly with the Bridgwater Borough Council to cope with the possibility of numbers of civilian war deaths arising from enemy action. In addition to emergency mortuaries within the Borough, five buildings, each approximately four to five miles outside the Borough, were set aside for use as emergency mortuaries. Equipment was obtained, and a volunteer Emergency Mortuary Squad formed. Arrangements were also made for the latter to be reinforced by a Mortuary Flying Squad from Bristol if required.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHIEF SANITARY INSPECTOR  
FOR 1944.

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Mr. Chairman, Mrs. Forshaw & Gentlemen,

I beg to submit my Annual Report for the year ending 31st December, 1944.

This Report is again very much abbreviated and should be considered only as a summary of the work carried out during the year.

Complaints and Nuisances.

The number of complaints investigated during the year was 82, a decrease of 11 on the previous year. In many cases nuisances were abated as the result of informal action but it was found necessary to serve 9 Abatement Notices, a decrease of 6 on 1943. Several complaints were found to be not justified and no action was taken on them.

Of the nuisances found, 62 were abated during the year, although considerable difficulty was again experienced in getting work carried out, owing to difficulty in obtaining materials and the shortage of labour. In many cases it was necessary to extend the time limit set out in abatement notices, in order to give owners of property the fullest opportunity of complying with notices. The number of visits made in connection with nuisances was 332. In one case Court proceedings were instituted, and the Justices made a Nuisance Order and an order prohibiting the recurrence of the nuisance.

Housing.

Difficulty was also found in getting housing repairs dealt with, but in a number of cases minor repairs and improvements were carried out.

The general condition of house property has further deteriorated during the year and it is evident that the lack of ordinary maintenance work during the war years will result in an increased number of condemnations in the near future. This will have the effect of increasing the serious shortage of housing accommodation in the District.

During the year eleven Certificates of Essentiality were issued in respect of work on thirteen houses at an estimated cost of £3,547. Several applications for Certificates of Essentiality had to be refused by reason of the fact that the proposed work, although obviously essential and urgent, did not come within the scope of the scheme as set out in Ministry of Health Circular No. 2871.

Housing (Rural Workers) Act.

88 visits were made for the purpose of obtaining Certificates of Compliance with the provisions of the Acts. In a number of cases some maintenance work was found to be necessary and owners were pressed to have this carried out. In addition a number of queries as to letting to other than rural workers, charging more than permitted rent, etc. were dealt with.



The number of houses inspected under the Housing Acts was 51. 2 houses were represented as unfit for habitation and incapable of being rendered fit at a reasonable cost and Demolition Orders were made by the Council in both cases.

#### Overcrowding.

Six new cases of overcrowding were discovered during the year, five of which were abated by informal action. In the remaining case the overcrowding only amounted to half a unit and in view of war conditions the Council decided to take no formal action in the case.

#### Bakehouses.

Nineteen visits were made to bakehouses. Informal notices served were duly complied with.

#### General Sanitation.

The following improvements were carried out, generally as the result of informal action:-

W.C.'s	34
Baths	11
Sinks	20
Drainage Systems	22
Lavatory Basins	12
Chemical Closet	1
Connections to water main	6

A number of other minor improvements were also carried out.

#### Meat and Food

Every effort was made during the year to maintain the regular inspection of meat and other food at retail shops and 136 visits were made for this purpose.

It is also the practice to inspect the meat of animals killed for home consumption under licences issued by the Food Control Committee, and in view of the percentage of animals found to be diseased, this practice has been found to be justified. 387 visits were made for this purpose.

I give below details of meat condemned during the year:-

#### Beasts.

- 1 Bovine carcase and organs.
- 1 Calf carcase and organs.
- 34 lbs. beef.
- 3 hindquarter of beef.
- 3 heads and tongues.
- 4 livers.
- 1 set lungs.
- 1 stomach and intestines.

#### Sheep.

- 5 carcasses and organs.

### Pigs.

1 carcase and organs.  
20 heads and tongues.  
11 mesenterics and intestines.  
7 plucks.  
4 sets lungs.  
1 liver.

### Other Foods.

281 tins of various foods.  
2 lbs. cheese.  
2 cwts. 29 lbs. sugar.  
4 lbs. biscuits.

### Milk and Dairies.

The number of inspections carried out during the year was 578, a decrease of 10 on the previous year.

The production of milk is still being carried out under very great difficulties, and this is no doubt the reason why the standard of cleanliness is still not all that could be desired. The delay between the end of milking and collection of the milk from farm premises - in some cases as much as five hours - is a very regrettable feature, and is undoubtedly the cause of souring in many instances, particularly during periods of humid weather.

A system has now been introduced whereby the Sanitary Inspector's opinion is sought before a new entrant into milk production can dispose of his milk to the Milk Marketing Board. This arrangement is welcomed as it gives an opportunity to see that an applicant's premises are suitable and his method of production satisfactory before he is given permission to sell his milk. Where buildings are unsatisfactory but can be made fit, it is the practice to give temporary permission on the applicant giving a written undertaking to carry out all necessary work within a stated time.

The number of producers on the register at the end of 1944 was 807 including 138 producer retailers. The number of producers of T.T. milk was 19 and there were also 25 producers of Accredited milk. The number of retail purveyors of milk was 16.

The sampling of designated milk was continued during the year, 163 samples of T.T. and Accredited milk being taken.

27 samples of milk were taken for testing for the presence of Tubercle Bacilli, and 1 sample was found to give a positive result. Appropriate action was taken in this case by the County Council.

39 new registrations were granted during the year, 36 for wholesale purveyors and 3 for wholesale and retail purveyors.

The efforts made to get improved conditions at dairy farms during the year, produced the following results:-

New cowshed floors and improved drainage	11
New cowsheds	4
New dairies	9
Main water supply to cowsheds	2
Cowsheds rebuilt	3



### Moveable Dwellings.

Considerable difficulty was experienced during the year in the supervision of moveable dwellings occupied by seasonal workers such as pea pickers and fruit pickers. These workers, who are usually of the gipsy type, are employed by fruit and vegetable dealers who permit them to camp in fields which are owned by the dealers. The workers have their own moveable dwellings, and the dealers usually provide rough sanitary conveniences of the bucket or pit type. The habits of these workers are often objectionable and they usually fail to use any sanitary conveniences which may be provided for them, with the result that the camp and its surroundings become extremely foul. These workers are usually in the district from May to August each year and many complaints are received from residents in the vicinity of the camps.

72 visits were made during the year in connection with moveable dwellings and one prosecution was instituted against a dealer for permitting camping for more than 42 consecutive days without being in possession of a licence authorising the land to be so used. The case was dismissed presumably because the Justices did not consider that continuous occupation for 42 days had been proved. This evidence is extremely hard to get as local residents are rarely prepared to give evidence in these cases however much they may be aggrieved by the presence of the gipsies.

### Infectious Diseases.

67 disinfections were carried out during the year, 99 visits being made in connection with infectious diseases.

### Verminous Premises.

21 visits were made to verminous premises and 6 dwellings were treated for vermin; in addition 30 visits were made in connection with rodent infestation.

### Civil Defence.

Some relaxation in Civil Defence duties was permitted towards the end of the year, but a considerable amount of time was spent on this work, particularly during August when a further contingent of evacuees was received in the district. Assistance was also given in December when a number of evacuees returned to their homes.

I am, Mr. Chairman, Mrs. Forshaw  
and Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

F.A. MAILE

Chief Sanitary Inspector.